PLANS FOR IMPROVING LIVERPOOL.

In June last the Liverpool Improvement Committee drew up an advertisement inviting architects, engineers, &c. to offer views and plans for the improvement of the borough, and the laying out of unoccupied lands in its immediate vicinity. The committee, as directed by the council, offered premiums of 50*l.* for the best plans, and 25*l.* for the second best. In compliance with the advertisement, twenty-three plans were sent in, each of which was accompanied with explanations and statements. After a careful consideration of all the plans sent in, the committee selected the plan bearing the motto "Rus in Urbe" (found to be by Mr. H. P. Horner), as entitled to the first premium, and that bearing the motto "Curator" (by Mr. Henderson) as the next in merit.

In submitting this report, the committee add, that the funds at the disposal of the committee, under the existing Improvement Acts, will be wholly absorbed by the improvements now in progress, and concur in the opinion expressed by former committees, that no comprehensive plan can be carried out solely from the surplus income of the borough, yearly at the disposal of the council.

According to the *Liverpool Times* almost all the plans possess great merit, though to carry out the designs of some of the exhibitors would cost the whole of the surplus income of the corporation for the next half-dozen years.

Mr. Horner commences his remarks by stating that a plan of the town, revised from time to time, showing the improvements wanted, should be kept by every public office, and the progressive improvements effected under the guidance of an officer, whose duty it would be to carry them out whenever practicable. Liverpool, he says, bears distinct marks of having been laid out with little view to the probability of its increase, and in few towns have more opportunities been missed of correcting original errors at later periods of its progress. Amongst the most striking defects in these respects he mentions the cutting off of leading thoroughfares, as if they were never to be extended, and the closing them with public buildings, thus affording no outlet, except at great distances, for main streets. Mr. Horner then alludes to the irregular manner in which the districts at the north and south ends of the town have been laid out, without any reference to their connecting themselves with the central part of the town.

As regards his plans for improving the outskirts, he remarks, that his attention was mainly directed to the connection of roadways at present detached, straightening those inconveniently crooked, providing for their probable communication with existing or proposed streets, and, above all, securing one of the best provisions for the health and comfort of an immense population—a belt of garden or park land, bounding the present extent of the town, and insuring the interposition of a stretch of comparative country, between the existing buildings and any more of a town character. He proposes to form gradually nine parks for public recreation.

Nearly all the competitors propose, as a matter of course, sweeping changes and improvements round St. George's Hall, that the building may be seen to advantage.

It is stated that the want of funds will prevent the formation, at present, of any of the proposed parks. To talk of want of funds for such a purpose on the part of such a town as Liverpool, wealthy and important in the highest degree, is quite nonsensical.

LIVERPOOL ARCHITECTURAL SOCIETY.

At a meeting of this society on the 30th ult. Mr. Chas. Barber, vice-president, in the chair, the attendance being more numerous than it had been at any previous meeting of the society held this year, a paper was read by Mr. W. Walker, of Manchester, on "Ventilation as a Branch of Sanitary Reform." Mr. Walker showed, that although sanitary improvement formed one of the principal topics of the day, as yet very little had been done in that direction. It was true that during the sway of the late epidemic, and since that time, more copious supplies of water had been furnished to large towns, some few drainage works had been undertaken, and in many of our public buildings great attention had been paid to the insurance of copious supplies of air, yet sanitary operations were, generally speaking, limited and imperfect. Ventilation was not merely a summer question, but at all seasons of the year we must have air. However, care must be taken that it is not introduced into rooms in an objectionable manner. Mr. Walker then alluded to some of the plans of ventilation which had been successfully adopted.

Mr. R. Rawlinson said, he quite agreed with Mr. Walker, that it was time architects took up the subject, and that ventilation should be considered in the structure of buildings. If it was necessary to put a roof upon four walls, it was quite as imperative to make provision for the due regulation and escape of air. Any attempts at ventilation after the house had been occupied, or even the adoption of so-called "ventilators" in chimney-breasts, were mere make-shifts. They did not give that which was required, namely, full, free, copious, and safe ventilation. To be safe, ventilation must be diffuse; it must also be perfectly under control. He had no hesitation in saying that a well-built house of modern construction, in the metropolis or Liverpool, was the most dangerous tenement that a man could put his head into. He lived in a London house, which was so well built that the door vibrated like an Æolian harp. When he sat by the fire writing he had to resort to the expedient of turning a bucket the wrong side up to put his feet upon, in order to escape the ill effects of the draft, the fireplace being low. He had no doubt that many literary men who became absorbed in their subject, and got their heads heated whilst their feet were cold, from the drafts which crept along the floor, had their constitutions materially affected from want of the necessary precautions. The corridor, lobby, and staircase of a house should be well warmed, which would do away with those cutting drafts that crept along the floors and were so injurious in winter. Allusion had been made to the ventilation of cottage tenements: as Inspector to the Board of Health it had been his duty to travel through the length and breadth of the land, and he had visited tenements of all descriptions. Doubtless many gentlemen in that room had read the statements drawn up by men in office, and imagined them to be overcharged; but he could assure them that there did not exist a man who could adequately describe the utter wretchedness in which the lower classes of this country lived in the nineteenth century, and in the midst of boasted civilization and refinement. It was laid down as a law that 800 feet of air was necessary for each individual, and he had seen thirty persons snoring fast asleep where there should have been but two. It was high time this state of things should be altered.

PATENT ABUSES.

An article which appeared in THE BUILDER a year back on this subject, and which was followed by another six months after, entitled "Patent Usurpations," opened a question for discussion by the press, which has been seized on by all the journals and periodicals in succession.

The admirable print called *Household Words* sets forth, in *naïve* but simple demonstration, the hustling and plucking that a poor man is sure to encounter in his progress through the multiform offices in course of registration, chaffing, and waxing. The *Dispatch* goes somewhat further, and exposes the injustice and fraud perpetrated upon struggling genius; as also the impolicy of thwarting the free spirit of invention in a state the very essence of whose prosperity depends on the skill and superiority of her manufactures: but somehow, no one has as yet referred to the chicanery and artifice by the base practice whereof the poor inventor is too frequently choused out of his profits and recompense, when, after having run the gauntlet through the several levyers of black mail, after having met every demand, he is sure to be assailed as soon as his patent is sealed and signed by the sovereign.

In order to raise the funds required to clear all the toll-bars through his journey, the inventor must confide in some one the details of his plan: in many cases two, three, or more persons become acquainted with these confidential trusts, and in all cases where the material is an article of manufacturing fabric, it is indispensable that models be made in that material, and therefore that a further confidence be placed in the manufacturer in the express form of the thing to be patented.

Here, then, at the outset we find genius exposed to the chance of publication, either by the party who first entertained his proposition and mayhap rejected it, or by the party whose interest it is, above all others, to defeat the project of the discoverer,—namely, the manufacturer of the commodity which is the subject of patent.

In the case submitted to THE BUILDER, the originality of the invention consisted in a new adaptation of tubes in terra cotta (encased in walls) to the purpose of carrying off smoke, or for chimney flues. Having paid the ordinary fees, and taken out a *caveat*, considering his invention safe, he sent for models to a tilery in Staffordshire. Of course there was no difficulty in getting cylindrical tubes in that material, but unhappily the object of their application oozed out!

Straightway the secret was disclosed, and long before the patent was or could be sealed, the manufacturer of fictile wares fabricated terra cotta linings for chimneys. During the interval of time between the enrolment of the *caveat* and the registration of the patent, several oppositions were started to the proposed plan and design of the inventor: these claims and objections were duly heard and decided by the Attorney-General (Sir F. Pollock), and having been set aside, after some months' delay, and of course at a cost increased by such procedure, at length the end and object of all the expense, care, and toil of the invention was attained, and the patent sealed.

The next thing in the nature of events to be expected, as had long been anticipated, was the profit on the use of the patented plan by builders. Claims were made upon several so infringing the right supposed to be legalised by the Queen's sign manual. At first a hesitation followed the demand, and lastly, a positive refusal to acknowledge a patent right which had unavoidably transpired while in course of gestation through the offices.

The highest in the arts were, in these instances, the pirates, or at least the users of the principle so suppositiously secured.

As, amongst other illustrious edifices, the flues in question were adopted in Buckingham Palace, the disappointed artificer has put the question of his rights at issue as against the architect of the sovereign, whose palace derives the benefit of that ingenuity which has to this, the seventh year of his patent, been wholly unrequited.

In this case the mechanic (a bricklayer) is left to his hopes and the casual success of his trowel at five shillings a-day, with the contingency of his suit superadded—and he possibly may not be more aggrieved by the royal repudiation of his claims, than others, who, unlike the *protégé* of Charles Dickens, are unable to expose their grievances for the support and sympathy of an impartial public. Q.

CLUB-HOUSE FOR LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES.

I am a fellow of one of the most popular scientific societies in London, and constantly attend its meetings. Friends of mine have not unfrequently asked me to propose them as members, but when they have seen the place of meeting of the society they have (with only one or two exceptions) civilly withdrawn their request, judging of the company by the room they assemble in. My friends were certainly wrong in their conclusions, for the society is composed of all that is most brilliant in science and literature in the metropolis. But the room we assemble in gives you the idea of the "progress of science under difficulties." We want space for our library, for our meetings, and for servants. In vain committees meet: we can neither build before, behind, nor on one side. If we build an attic we shall have the house on our heads. From all I hear, there are many of the societies in London in the same predicament.

Now, Sir, I think that this state of things might be easily remedied. If men meet together in societies, that they may have better accommodation than each individually can

To learn how to use PDF Compression and OCR visit our website